

PEER OBSERVATION OF INSTRUCTION

Overview

As a teaching-first institution, Queens places strong emphasis on faculty teaching performance and supports faculty members in their ongoing growth and development as teachers. Peer observations of teaching are important tools in gauging and fostering growth in teaching.

Peer observations may be conducted in several ways and for several purposes. Three types are:

Type	Purpose	When to Use
Class Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess level of teaching performance • Complement student and self-evaluations • Concisely narrate key strength(s), an important area for further reflection, and recommended resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When class observation or class visit is required by policy in the Faculty Handbook, such as annual evaluations and promotion and/or tenure reviews • When indicated in a CFIP Memo
MODEL Multi-stage Observation and Dialogue to Enhance Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnose what may be contributing to an issue in teaching performance • Offer extended guidance for how to address issues • Provide robust feedback on teaching performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an issue in teaching performance issue surfaces that is commensurate with the extended time needed for this format • Early in a 5- or 6-year review period • Individual faculty interest • When indicated in a CFIP Memo
Teaching Exchange (contact CAFÉ if you are interested in this format)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share ideas and techniques outside evaluation processes • Foster collegial inquiry • Provide collegial feedback organically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared faculty interest

Tip! The Class Visitation Report on pages 3-4 can be completed and submitted **electronically**. To do this:

Download this file to your device. Then open this file in Adobe Reader. Type into the fields and check boxes on pp. 3-4. Click the signature box to insert a digital signature (digital signature functionality may not be available if you are working with the file in a browser).

When you are ready to submit the form, you can **Print to PDF** and select only pages 3 and 4 in the Print dialogue box. This will save these 2 pages as a file, which you should give a new file name. Then you can email the completed form by attaching the 2-page file to an email.

Class Visitation

Instructions

The form that follows can be used to conduct and document a “classroom observation” or “class visit” described in the Faculty Handbook Section VII as part of the annual performance evaluation. In this case, the class visit/observation and Class Visitation Report are completed by a faculty member as described in the Faculty Handbook (e.g., by a faculty member designated by the department chair in consultation with the dean). The instructor and faculty visitor should identify a mutually acceptable in-person class session or online module that is both representative of the class and productive for the purposes of observation (e.g., not an exam day). When an online module will be visited, the [Access to MyCourses Exception form](#) must be completed in advance to arrange for the visitor to gain temporary (e.g., one-week) access to the course through MyCourses.

The form that follows may also be used consistent with a Counseling for Improved Performance (CFIP) Memo. In this case, the completion and use of the form (e.g., who completes the class visit/observation and form, when the observation occurs, use of information on the form) are governed by the language in the CFIP Memo.

Relation to Annual Evaluations and Promotion and/or Tenure Reviews

The Class Visitation Report was developed as a concise document with a simple protocol to facilitate the annual process of class observations conducted across course modalities and instructor types as indicated in the Faculty Handbook Section VII. This report can be completed with modest amount of time following a class visit.

The Class Visitation Report provides one way of assessing a faculty member’s teaching performance. It is a peer assessment focused on class activities in one course, for a portion of the course as it is being conducted. In this respect, it complements Course Evaluations by students. It also complements instructional materials and reflective statements submitted by faculty members in annual evaluations and promotion and/or tenure reviews. As multiple student perspectives are captured through Course Evaluations, perspectives of multiple peer faculty members may be captured through Class Visitation Reports, helping to highlight shared observations and patterns of observations, rather than isolated, individual perspectives.

The Class Visitation Report ideally prompts ongoing reflection and adaptation to inform the annual evaluation and promotion and/or tenure review processes. A free response question prompts faculty reflection on one area of teaching to help shape annual evaluation goals. This question also echoes Queens standards of performance in teaching (Faculty Handbook Section V.B.1) through the expectation that faculty continue to develop and refine their pedagogy. Reflection and adaptation prompted through annual observations may shape the portfolio in a promotion and/or tenure process: a faculty member may narrate and document efforts to develop and refine pedagogy in a process of growth and adaptation to changing students and instructional contexts.

Completing the annual observation process with the concise document that follows will help identify valuable opportunities to apply a more time-intensive, [dialogue-based form of peer observation](#) (MODEL) or a quality assurance tool for online course development (see Faculty Handbook Appendices).

Included Lists of Questions

Experienced faculty observers will often be able to complete the table portion of the Class Visitation Report without using the hyperlinks to the later portions of this document. When addressing the free response questions, though, faculty observers may find the hyperlinked lists of questions helpful as prompts for providing more specific feedback on strengths and a key area warranting further reflection. Not every question in these lists will apply to every course or every class session. Question applicability will also vary by course modality.

Access, Submission, and Confidentiality

Within one week of the class observation/visit, the visitor gives the completed Class Visitation Report to the instructor who was observed and the instructor’s department chair or non-degree program director (i.e., General Education, Career Development).

The instructor submits the Class Visitation Report(s) as part of the annual evaluation process and promotion and/or tenure portfolio as indicated in the Faculty Handbook.

The contents of the Class Visitation Report are to be treated confidentially and are not to be shared or discussed with any other individuals beyond the deliberations and evaluations specified in the Faculty Handbook for annual evaluation, promotion, and/or tenure review processes.

CLASS VISITATION REPORT

Instructor:

Peer Visitor:

Course Number and Title:

Date observed:

Class meeting time or dates covered by online module observed:

Criterion (underlined phrase is a functional hyperlink within a larger document and does not indicate emphasis)	Can be strengthened	Generally true of this session/module	Exceptionally demonstrated
1. A positive and respectful learning environment is maintained.			
2. Students are engaged in the learning process.			
3. Instructor uses varied instructional methods to promote student learning and student engagement, including learner-centered methods .			
4. Instructor conveys enthusiasm for student learning of the subject.			
5. Session or online module's connections to course learning objectives, prior/later sessions, and students' prior knowledge/experience are made explicit.			
6. Instructor uses class time and instructional activities in effective support of stated learning objectives.			
7. Instruction is effectively tailored to the context (e.g., learner characteristics, course level, physical environment/modality, time).			
8. Instructor and class session or online module are well-organized (e.g., outline/agenda, transitions, summary).			
9. Instructor communicates effectively with learners. Concepts are explained clearly.			
10. Instructor demonstrates disciplinary knowledge that is current and appropriate to course level and focus.			
11. Instructor appropriately checks on learner progress towards learning objectives (e.g., formative assessment, learner opportunities to practice skills and receive feedback).			

12. What was working especially well in this class session or online module?

13. What one criterion do you most encourage the instructor to reflect on further to refine and develop pedagogy in this class? Note any suggestions you may have for resources or steps that the instructor could use (CAFÉ, Hayworth Center for Online Learning, etc.).

14. If this was a repeat observation, how was this observation similar to or different from the previous observation?

Visitor signature:

Considerations for Peer Observers¹

Climate for Learning

Does the instructor. . .

1. Have good rapport with students?
2. Know and use student names?
3. Respond to students as individuals?
4. Treat students with respect?
5. Create a participative atmosphere?
6. Allow opportunity for individual expression?
7. Help students extend their responses?
8. Respond constructively to student opinions?
9. Respect diverse points of view?
10. Mediate conflict or differences of opinion when needed?
11. Encourage students to interact respectfully with each other?
12. Attend respectfully to student puzzlement? (rather than embarrassing or belittling students)
13. Use humor appropriately?
14. Respond to distractions effectively?
15. Address potentially disruptive behaviors before they impact learning environment?
16. Use the instructor's authority to create an environment conducive to learning?
17. Treat class members equitably? (rather than showing favoritism)
18. Prevent one group from dominating discussion and hindering others' participation?
19. Solicit student feedback?
20. Respect constructive criticism if received?

Student Engagement

1. Does the instructor capture the learners' attention at the outset? (e.g., clearly stated purpose, anecdote, dilemma, stimulating question).
2. Does the instructor speak with confidence and authority?
3. Does the instructor use a presentation style that facilitates note-taking?
4. Are one or more students unmotivated or unable to follow the class?
5. Does the instructor offer "real world" applications?
6. Does the instructor use rhetorical questions to capture student attention?
7. Does the instructor use humor to engage students?
8. Does the instructor use space to maintain student engagement (e.g., proximity, movement)
9. Does the instructor use technology to foster student engagement?
10. Does the instructor pay attention to cues of boredom or confusion?
11. How does the instructor respond to changes in student attentiveness?
12. Is student thought and participation required? (e.g., are face-to-face lectures punctuated by questions and discussion, are online lectures punctuated with online interactive activities and complemented by student-student interaction)
13. How much do students participate in responding to instructor questions?
14. How does the instructor respond to student opinions?
15. Does the instructor encourage or discourage questions and comments from students?
16. Do students ask questions?
17. Does the instructor foster student-student interaction as appropriate to the course modality?
18. Does the instructor use positive reinforcement to encourage student participation?
19. Does the instructor draw quieter or non-participating students into activities/discussion?
20. Does the instructor take steps to prevent specific students from dominating activities/discussions?

¹ Many of these questions were adapted from the sources in the [Reference List](#).

Instructional Methods

Does the instructor. . .

1. Use more than one method of instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion/discussion forum, small group activities)?
2. Use instructional methods that are appropriate for the content?
3. Use instructional methods that are appropriate for the course modality?
4. Incorporate a variety of instructional materials like audio-visual media, diagrams, etc.?
5. Provide an outline and/or handouts?
6. Effectively explain new terms or concepts?
7. Make lecture segments stimulating and thought provoking?
8. Use appropriate examples, metaphors, and/or analogies?
9. Provide enough demonstrations?
10. Effectively use technology to foster student learning (e.g., in-class use, use of tools in MyCourses)?
11. Use active learning strategies (e.g., group work, paired discussions, polling, online quizzes or games)?
12. Provide clear directions for active learning tasks?
13. Provide opportunities for dialogue about an activity with peers and/or the instructor?
14. Help students understand assigned reading?
15. Link content to application?
16. Apply theory to problem-solving?
17. Ask questions at different levels of Bloom's taxonomy? (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)
18. Present or incorporate divergent viewpoints?

Learner-Centered Instructional Methods

Does the instructor. . .

1. Serve as a supportive resource to students, rather than a disseminator of information?
2. Have students generate examples, solve problems, or analyze information as a means of learning?
3. Involve students in shaping what is discussed in class? (e.g., through questions, exercising choice among alternatives, or student talk about content)
4. Incorporate student ideas into class?
5. Encourage students to respond to each other's questions?
6. Encourage student debate?
7. Encourage students to summarize and add to others' summaries?
8. Help students learn how to read effectively in the discipline?
9. Help students learn how to analyze information in the discipline?
10. Use content to help students think like professionals in the discipline?
11. Help students learn how to ask good questions in the discipline?
12. Provide appropriately challenging tasks?
13. Use instructional technology to facilitate these learner-centered methods?

Session Purpose and Integration

Does the instructor. . .

1. Clearly state the main goal for the class session or online module?
2. Clearly convey how the class session or online module supports course learning objectives?
3. Make or prompt connections between a) students' prior learning and experience and b) this class session or online module to prepare students for new learning?
4. Make clear connections between the in-person and online components of a hybrid class?
5. Relate the class session or online module to students' personal goals or societal concerns?
6. Clarify how websites and audiovisual materials relate to learning objectives?
7. Integrate assigned readings or similar material as appropriate
8. Clarify what preparation students should have completed prior to the next class or online module?
9. Preview how this class session or online module will connect to future session(s)

Use of Time

Does the instructor. . .

1. Arrive on time?
2. Speak at a pace that permits students to understand and take notes?
3. Structure and run activities with consideration of student attention spans?
4. Allow sufficient time for students to complete tasks such as group work, in-class assignments, activities?
5. Allow sufficient clean-up time as needed within the class session?
6. Allow sufficient time for questions?
7. Allow sufficient time for discussion?
8. Maintain control of the class and the use of class time in support of learning objectives?
9. Construct and deliver content in an online or hybrid course consistent with course instructional time (see Alternative Instructional Equivalences in the Faculty Handbook)?
10. Convey how time spent on activities, discussion, and other instructional methods supports course learning objectives?
11. Provide timely communications and responses to students when teaching in an online environment?

Adaptation to Instructional Context

Does the instructor. . .

1. Effectively use the classroom space (including furniture, lighting, etc.) in support of learning?
2. Use a variety of spaces in the classroom to present material (i.e., does not “hide” behind the podium)
3. Take steps to mitigate negative aspects of the instructional context (e.g., long class duration, noise, time of day)?
4. Pace and deliver content in ways that address students’ needs for comprehension and note-taking?
5. Construct and deliver content in ways that address students’ attention spans, relevant to the course modality?
6. Require skills that are not beyond reasonable expectations for the course and/or students?
7. Require students to engage in higher order thinking as appropriate to the course level?
8. Ask questions that challenge students to think more deeply as appropriate to the course level and student aptitude?
9. Encourage students to answer challenging questions by providing cues and encouragement?
10. Relate course content to students’ General Education experiences as appropriate?
11. Adapt the course content and/or instructional methods to support students with varying backgrounds
12. Use technology to support students’ various ways of learning

Organization

Does the instructor. . .

1. Appear well-prepared for class?
2. Begin class on time in an orderly, organized fashion?
3. Preview the structure of the session or online module?
4. Provide aids or use technology to help students understand the session’s organization?
5. Follow the session structure and scheduled topics?
6. Have necessary materials and equipment readily available?
7. Emphasize key points in a way that is clear to students?
8. Provide periodic summaries of session segments?
9. Make effective transitional statements between topics or session segments?
10. Avoid digressing from the main topic?
11. Provide a conclusion that summarizes main points (or prompts students to do so)?
12. Make navigation in the online environment logical, clear, and efficient (for the module observed)?
13. Provide clarity about deadlines and dates (for the module observed)?
14. Use MyCourses tools to help students stay on schedule (for the module observed)?

Communication (General)

Does the instructor. . .

1. Articulate words audibly and clearly so that they are understandable to all students?
2. Visually represent words that might be difficult for students to hear?
3. Use an appropriate rate of delivery for student comprehension?
4. Repeat, elaborate, or explain complex information in multiple ways to facilitate student understanding?
5. Vary the pace and pitch of voice for emphasis and interest?
6. Speak conversationally or extemporaneously?
7. Avoid over-reliance on reading content from notes, slides, or texts?
8. Use speech fillers, (e.g. "um," "OK") in a way that is not distracting?
9. Talk to the students (rather than the board, wall, or windows)?
10. Use gestures to enhance meaning?
11. Avoid distracting mannerisms?
12. Write on the board legibly?
13. Provide visual aids or handouts that are easily read?
14. Provide demonstrations in a way that is visible to all students?
15. Provide clear directions or procedures?
16. Allow adequate wait time when asking questions?
17. Refrain from answering own questions?
18. Respond to student answers constructively? (e.g., help students extend, elaborate, or clarify responses)
19. Answer student questions clearly and directly?
20. Use technology to enhance communication?
21. Use technology to provide accessible course material?

Disciplinary Knowledge

Does the instructor. . .

1. Make accurate statements according to the standards of the discipline?
2. Incorporate up-to-date developments or research in the field as appropriate to the course?
3. Use materials that are current?
4. Cite authorities to support statements?
5. Provide appropriate disciplinary background for ideas, concepts, or theories?
6. Present views other than own when appropriate?
7. Make distinctions between fact and opinion?
8. Identify diverse sources, perspectives, and authorities in the field?
9. Admit error or insufficient knowledge, and plans to remedy flawed, absent, or unclear information?

Checks on Learner Progress

Does the instructor. . .

1. Recognize when students do not understand?
2. Use questions effectively to gauge student comprehension?
3. Use "classroom assessment techniques" (minute papers, muddiest point, etc.)?
4. Give opportunities for students to practice skills or demonstrate learning in class (e.g., guided practice, independent practice, individual practice, or group practice)?
5. Give opportunities for students to practice skills or demonstrate learning through homework?
6. Give periodic feedback on student learning or performance?
7. Give individual students specific, constructive feedback?
8. Specify whether/how learning tasks will be evaluated?
9. Use both graded and ungraded activities to check on learner progress?
10. Provide rubrics to clarify standards of performance?
11. Provide opportunities for students to engage in peer review?
12. Provide opportunities for student self-assessment?
13. Use technology to check on learner progress (e.g., polling, MyCourses quizzes, completion tracking)?

References

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